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## Resilience Programmes and their Place in Education, a Critical Review with Reference to Interventions in Wolverhampton

**Karl Royle**

Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing

University of Wolverhampton

Walsall Campus

West Midlands

WS13BD, UK

### Abstract

*This paper reviews an evaluation of two small scale “resilience” programmes carried out as part of the Wolverhampton City Council Big Lottery funded Headstart programme trial phase 2 in 2015 in preparation for a larger scale implementation in phase 3 (2017). Whilst the initial evaluation of the programmes used conventional education based impact frameworks this paper interrogates and frames the activities carried out through the lens of the capability approach in order to appraise the extent to which the programmes are potentially able to contribute to developing “valued functionings” within participants’ lives. It goes further by examining the findings from the programme evaluation against accepted definitions of resilience to show how far they might have contributed to some of the claimed attributes required for developing resilient lives amongst participants. The paper also draws on the concept of identity capital and considers the interventions from the conceptual standpoint of therapeutic governance. Wolverhampton is a City in the West Midlands region of the UK with high levels of deprivation coupled to a post industrialization backdrop with higher than average levels of unemployment. The paper questions the positioning of school based resilience and wellbeing programmes as a sole solution to mental health per se against a backdrop of increasing deprivation.*

**Key Words:** Resilience, Wellbeing, Capability, Identity, Agency.

### 1. Introduction

This paper critically reviews a qualitative impact evaluation of two interventions in Wolverhampton Schools, Coleyshaw, Elsey and (2015) that were designed to develop resilience within children aged 10 to 16 and equip them with techniques for dealing with challenging events within their lives. It must be noted here that the Wolverhampton Headstart Project (WHP) also focuses on community and family activities but the schools programme is a core element in reaching out to young people in the city. The programmes are intended to develop protective factors against the risk of developing mental health problems in later life and to enable young people to cope with perceived and actual stresses of living and growing up in Wolverhampton. Resilience has several definitions but is generally agreed to be centred on the ability to thrive despite adverse circumstances, vulnerability and risk. Resilience is commonly referred to as the ability to ‘bounce back’. (Rutter, 1985; Stein, 2005). Newman (2004), quoted in the NCH report notes that resilience is framed by several factors working together.

**Risk:** any factor or combination of factors that increases the chance of an undesirable outcome affecting a person.

**Vulnerability:** a feature that renders a person more susceptible to a threat.

**Protective factors:** the circumstances that moderate the effects of risk.

**Resilience:** positive adaptation in the face of severe adversities. (2007, p.2)

Ungar (2006) argues that resilience is not solely an individual quality or ability and is dependent on thinking about resilience as context dependent. He notes (2006, p.221) “Whatever is outside the child is going to have to support resilience if the child is to experience well-being. Resilient children need resilient families and communities.” Ungar (2006) also notes that resilient behaviours may not be what we expect as mainstream educators, as getting by and thriving despite adversity within different communities may require access to different value sets and behaviours. Taking this a little further Secombe (2002) notes that beyond the individual, family and community we also need to address structural deficiencies within society and the social policies that families need to become better functioning in adverse situations. Masten (1994, p. 10) notes that developing resilience requires, “multi-faceted paradigms that attempt to reduce modifiable risk, strengthen meaningful assets, and recruit core developmental processes within the child, family and the broader community”.

### **1.1 Three lenses for review**

This notion of resilience is interrogated in the paper through three lenses. Firstly, the capability approach, (Sen 1992; Robyns 2005; Nussbaum 2011), provides a framework for the interrogation of resilience intervention programmes by looking at the capabilities or “beings and doings” of a person available to individuals within particular contexts. A key aspect of the capability approach is “agency freedom” or the ability to choose a life that is valued. In other words, are individuals able to convert capabilities that are available to them into valued functioning and does the context (including local and national social policy) they are in support or hinder that conversion. The question of value is about the opportunity to choose, so whose “value” in terms of what functioning can be achieved becomes an important question. It enables us to consider what society currently values and how it might need to align more directly with the needs and values of communities so that capabilities can thrive. Looking at the Wolverhampton interventions in the light of capability theory should give insights into whether they are capability enhancing (does increasing resilient behaviours lead to the conversion of capability into functioning) or at least, do no harm in this regard. A further second lens for appraisal is the construct of identity capital after Cote (1996) which is the idea that alongside actual capital assets in a child’s life, the social capital, (family, friends and community which Ungar outlines as essential for resilience) there is identity capital which is about the construction of self; important according to Warin (2013) for the successful negotiation of schooling towards a positive outcome. She argues that those from less deprived more advantaged backgrounds will have more successful outcomes due to an articulated narrative of self that sets out a life course or aspirational set of values that drives positive engagement with school. A third and somewhat overarching lens investigates whether the Wolverhampton interventions are part of a wider phenomena of therapeutic governance. This perspective argues that psycho-social interventions are part of a wider policy stance that focuses on social risk management so that citizens are seen as vulnerable and susceptible to psychological and social dysfunctionality, Pupavac (2001). She notes that this leads to a psychological model of social control where:

The therapeutic paradigm has become integral to how state institutions relate to citizens: in public life with the new ‘politics of feeling’; in education with self-esteem displacing intellectual understanding as the goal; in family policy with the expansion of relationship counselling and the professionalization of parenting; in the economy with therapeutic support for the unemployed; in law with a shift from an adversarial system to a form of therapeutic intervention and mediation (Nolan, 1998). (2001, p.2) Ecclestone and Lewis (2013) also note how positive psychology approaches and CBT derived training courses are contesting space within schooling alongside other curriculum subjects. They note four underlying premises of resilience and emotional wellbeing derived programmes: That teachers should switch explicit attention from subject-based curriculum content and associated skills, where resilience (and other constructs such as confidence, self-esteem, etc.) might be a by-product, to direct awareness-raising of, and interventions in, emotions and feelings that trigger problem-solving strategies; that resilience is a combination of skill, attitude and disposition and an essential precondition or foundation for learning; that children, young people and adults can be taught to be resilient; and that resilience endures and transfers between different contexts.” (2013, p.200).

Ecclestone and Lewis (2013) note further that resilience programmes offer rules based activities that allow measurement of progress, which they argue fits in well with a performance driven agenda where engagement with education requires assent to the status quo and compliance. It follows that any emotional regulation programme that achieves better behaviour in school is arguably supportive of the current way of working within the schools and potentially negates any alternative solutions. It is the children that are “weighed, measured and found wanting” rather than the educational approaches and strategies employed. They also highlight that these interventions are driven by notions of risk, vulnerability and dysfunction. “Since the late 1990s, a key imperative for interventions in schools framed around emotional well-being and/or emotional competence has been widespread political and public consensus that Britain faces an unprecedented crisis of emotional well-being” Ecclestone and Lewis (2013, p198). They outline the depiction of an expansion of risk from the vulnerability embodied in terms such as the precariat, (Standing 2011) and the real risks of social deprivation to the more mundane and everyday:

The ensuing long lists of potential risks and harms, and vulnerability to them, offer a spectrum from the most intractable structural risks to the most mundane and common place. One outcome is agreement across political and ideological standpoints that people need to develop resilience in the face of a spectrum of risk, from unemployment, drug use, family breakdown and mental ill-health to everyday difficulties in learning maths, dealing with social relationships and interactions and coping with uncomfortable feelings. Ecclestone and Lewis (2013, p.206) This is a way of thinking about individuals and groups that marks them as deficient against a norm and locates the reason for their dysfunction within themselves rather than looking at them in terms of existing capability and the structural inequalities that limit choices and possibilities. Liebenberg, Ungar and Vijver define resilience as a threefold dynamic: The capacity of individuals to navigate their ways to resources that sustain well-being; the capacity of individuals’ physical and social ecologies to provide those resources; and the capacity of individuals, their families and their communities to negotiate culturally meaningful ways to share resources. (2011, p.219)

Other researchers, according to Winders (2014, p.4) identify a similar dynamic of three broad categories of protective factors in promoting resilience:“(i)individual personality attributes or temperament (within the child); (ii) family characteristics or resources; and (iii) environmental influence or assets outside of the family.”Ungar’s earlier (2008, p1) work reinforces this community asset based approach and refers to 7 mental health enhancing qualities (tensions) “access to material resources; access to supportive relationships; development of a desirable identity; experiences of power and control; adherence to cultural traditions; experience of social justice; and experience of cohesion with others.”

It follows, given the above, and in the case of Wolverhampton it is arguably so, that if the basic fabric of society and communities is degraded and available resources reduced then capacity for resilience by actors will be diminished. Winders (2014) notes that low socioeconomic status is one of the most predominantly researched variables highlighted as a major risk factor in the development of negative outcomes for mental health amongst children. In this context it would seem that school based resilience “development” interventions in isolation are at risk of only teaching people how to put up with reduced circumstances rather than using resource to focus on the cause of the reduced circumstances. This is problematic if resilience is couched solely in terms of an individual skills or emotional/mental health deficit that programmes can redress. On the other hand, if the interventions are part of a wider project looking at the whole ecology of resilience within communities then interventions may enable protective factors to be developed both around and within individuals. Qualities such as increased personal agency, self efficacy and bringing about a change in what Cote (1996) terms identity capital are all desirable protective factors. These affordances will arguably allow individuals to maintain a connection and engagement with the structure of schooling (which is part of the community asset base) for longer term positive outcomes. In the following sections, this paper will examine the Wolverhampton Headstart, school based interventions using the lenses above and the findings from the impact evaluation report Coleyshaw, et al (2015) This should give new insights into the programmes that will inform their future direction.

## ***2. Defining risk and vulnerability in Wolverhampton.***

The case for Wolverhampton as an area of risk and structural inequality is well set out in the preface to the Headstart project.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 (IMD 2015) shows Wolverhampton as the 18th most deprived local authority district in England with certain areas exhibiting even lower levels of deprivation. Wolverhampton has a particularly high proportion of children who live in families in relative poverty 29.2% of under 20s and 30.2% of under 16s compared with 18.6% and 19.2% nationally. This equates to nearly 17,000 children and young people under 20 and just over 15,000 children and young people under 16 living in households where income is less than 60% of median household income before housing costs. Significantly more children have free school meals across the city compared with the England average: nearly 24% compared to just over 16%: nearly 9,500 children had a free school meal in 2014. 35% of residents in Wolverhampton are from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups and there is an increasing influx of Roma from Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Between January 2014 to January 2016, 670 new to the UK 10 to 16 year olds joined Wolverhampton schools. Pace (2016, p3)

Most indices of deprivation including unemployment amongst young people and lack of qualifications and low adult literacy rates have been increasing since the economic downturn of 2008, and therefore, structurally, the situation is not improving. These structural issues are equated with higher risk for young people in terms of developing mental health issues but there are no statistics for this phenomena available within Wolverhampton nor are there indicators of consequent resilience or resilient behaviours. However, there are measures of wellbeing that are used to judge which areas of the city are in greatest need of interventions. It is generally accepted that exposure to multiple risks can lead to problems in later life, Winders (2014) but that not all exposed develop problems, thus creating interest in the protective factors that may help create resilience in the face of risk.

Alongside these structural factors several other indicators of risk are cited and are generally accepted within the professional literature as such. For example, young people who are acting as a carer, are from a minority ethnic group, are witnessing domestic violence, who have a parent or carer with mental health problems or who are misusing substances are deemed to be at higher risk of reduced well being and developing mental health issues themselves. These latter circumstances are those that provide real risk and vulnerability for young people that arguably no individual resilience development programmes can fix and as such require specialist resources.

## **2.1 Wolverhampton Interventions and Evaluation Format.**

Against this backdrop of deprivation, the WHP aimed to trial preventative interventions that develop protective factors in individuals and their communities. Whilst the Headstart trial also focused on community, schools were seen as a prime location for such interventions because of their educational function and the fact that they provide a structured space that children have to attend. The two interventions that were trialed within 16 Wolverhampton schools were the Penn Resilience Programme (PRP) (2016) in Secondary Schools and The SUMO (Stop Understand, Move on) Programme in Primary Schools (2016). These were evaluated qualitatively by using standard educational programme evaluation frameworks in order to ascertain whether: interventions increased capacity to support resilience across the school system; young people were more aware of resilience strategies and whether young people were actually using acquired resilience strategies at school/home. The evaluation also asked participants what the main significant changes for the schools, wider system effects and individuals were. The evaluation synthesized three impact evaluation frameworks: The Kirkpatrick Model (1994), Coburn's (2003) four dimensions of scale and Main Significant Change (MSC) methodology Dart (2003). 16 semi-structured interviews were carried out with a range of stakeholders including head teachers, key members of staff involved in programme implementation. A sample of 30 pupil participants across 8 schools. This included 3 primaries, 1 pupil referral unit and four secondary schools also took part through interview and focus groups. A range of data was collected looking at initial reactions to the programme, what individuals learned, whether behaviour was changed as a result and whether there was a lasting impact on the organisation in terms of the embedding, reach and sustainability of the reform. Participants were also asked to think about the biggest or most significant change that they had seen as a result of the programme. The findings of the report Coleyshaw., et al (2015) concerning schooling and individuals, are conceptually re-appraised below.

## **2.2 Using the capability approach as a critical lens.**

The capability approach is a way of thinking about the manner in which human beings are able or otherwise (due to particular contexts or systems, cultural frames or structural inequalities) to achieve the sort of life that they value. Sen, (1992, p 40) describes the approach as follows: The major constituents of the capability approach are functionings and capabilities.

Functionings are the “beings and doings” of a person, whereas a person’s capability is “the various combinations of functionings that a person can achieve” Zheng (2011) notes, quoting Sen (1992) that, “A functioning is an achievement, whereas a capability is the ability to achieve.” This means that capability is the range of possibilities open to individuals that can subsequently be converted into valued functionings. This range is dependent upon their context and the systems and processes, good and services etc. that may extend their capabilities or constrain them and the degree of agency and choice that people have to achieve the functionings that they value. Nussbaum (2011, p.290) notes that capability means “opportunity to select...the notion of freedom to choose is thus built into the notion of capability”. She goes further than Sen in actually defining 10 core capabilities as human rights of which the following are of particular relevance to the Headstart project.

2. Bodily Health – Able to have a good life which includes (but is not limited to) reproductive health, nourishment and shelter. *For this paper the bodily health definition is also extended to include mental health, the ability to live in circumstances that promote a healthy mind which is an aspiration of the Headstart project.* 4. Senses, Imagination and Thought – Able to use one's senses to imagine, think and reason in a 'truly human way'—informed by an adequate education. *These are included here because they reflect the development of self and identity formation and also allow us to question whether the inclusion of emotional wellbeing and resilience programmes are indeed part of “an adequate education”.* 5. Emotions – Able to have attachments to things outside of ourselves; this includes being able to love others, grieve at the loss of loved ones and be angry when it is justified. *This is included because it points towards the ability to gain resources from affiliations with other people in order to both gain and give succor and support and also to be angry when it is justified. The latter point is important if the WHPs are conceptualized as behavioural regulation programmes where justified anger may be suppressed.* 6. Practical Reason – Able to form a conception of the good and critically reflect on it. (2011, p.382)

This last point is important for identity formation particularly in terms of narratives of self that lead to the formation of identity capital that allow people to choose a life that they would value. This is critical in the forming of aspirations that would channel activity to make the most of the educational opportunities that are provided/accessible to an individual. A key part of the capability approach is agency freedom and being able to make choices. In terms of the WHP this converts to how individuals are able to identify and use different and new strategies to consider ways to act within a range of contexts, and to gain from the involvement and ideas of others within and across networks. The question is whether, as a result of the programmes, participants are better able to exercise choice in managing situations to their advantage through a better understanding of themselves and others. The capability approach also supports the intentions of the WHP to develop personal skills and attributes, Nussbaum notes:

“One job of a society that wants to promote the most important capabilities is to support the development of internal capabilities (these are the internal capacities of a person, intellectual, emotional, health, fitness, personality, learning skills) – all of which are trained or developed traits and abilities through education, resources to enhance physical and emotional health, support for family, care and love, a system of education and much more”(2011, p.248) The capability approach also revokes its reliance on freedom to choose for the young in a sort of “do no harm” invocation and also for adults at a basic need level because the realization of capabilities means that even if you have the opportunity to live a healthy life your circumstances may not allow you to do so should you be denied basic education and health care or environmental health as a result of policy decisions. Thus policy and practice are intrinsically linked with capability and functioning. The essence of the capability approach is that it does not seek coercion for example in forcing people to be healthy it merely recognizes that people have been provided with a choice. For example, it does not seek to enforce healthy functioning such as banning sugar but seeks to enable people to have an informed choice. This becomes problematic when policy meets people but also explains why many interventions are ineffective because they ignore the context of peoples’ lives. Children are however seen as different in the CA as Nussbaum notes.

“Children of course are different; requiring certain sorts of functioning of them (compulsory education for example) is defensible as a necessary prelude to adult capability. ...We can certainly agree that capability destruction in children is a particularly grave matter and as such should be off limits. “(201, p.306)

### **2.3 Wolverhampton Programme Findings and Capability: SUMO and PRP**

A key question for this discussion is whether the Penn Resilience and SUMO programmes in Wolverhampton developed qualities within individuals that lead to increased capability and functioning within their particular contexts. Specifically, did programmes increase agency within children that enabled them to negotiate more effectively a path to a life that they value. This could mean, engaging with the school system as it is now in a more productive way than previously and it could also mean being able to cope more ably with life conditions that might limit their ability to convert capability into functioning. If for example, an understanding of emotion regulation strategies allows them to stay in school and achieve then it is arguable that this is a capacity worth developing.

In looking at the primary school focused SUMO programme which uses 5 key strategies for thinking about how to deal with challenging situations it was clear that the simple conceptual language did provide a framework for negotiating a way through situations that might arise through the school day. Coleyshaw, et al (2015). A shared language between teachers and students allowed participants a mechanism to create or navigate a route to increased social capital provided by the staff. A member of staff noted:

Resilience for us...what we are focusing on is 'bounce back ability'.. being able to overcome challenges...face challenges and deal with them....and look for ways forward. We look at raising expectations of what they can do...provide strategies to cope ...take a moment and deal with life. Coleyshaw, et al (2015,p.10) This was echoed by the children who had "got" the concept. "I think of resilience as something called bounce back ability... example you make a mistake instead of getting angry think you can do better and just carry on." Coleyshaw, et al (2015,p.10). This somewhat reductionist view of resilience was reflected in the way that staff saw the programmes as a way of moderating behaviour within the school setting.

The first time I saw this was at a Head Teacher Conference where I was invited to come aboard and trial SUMO. The presentation did look exciting. I understood it to be a whole school behavior program that would ultimately have an effect on standards. (2015, p.9) Equally though children also saw it as having a positive effect on their behaviour at school: I have been better at understanding people 'cos before I came into Year Five I was always arguing about points of view...I think I've let that go...I feel really happy that I've got over and sorted that. I feel like I am going to improve more... since peer support and SUMO came out ...it has really changed my personality... and when they have arguments they say how they feel. (2015, p.14)

The Penn Resilience Programme, (PRP) trailed in secondary schools is an established programme based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and positive psychology. According to the Centre for Positive Psychology (2016, n.d.) the programme teaches "Cognitive-behavioral and social problem-solving skills and is based in part on cognitive-behavioral principles. PRP also teaches a variety of strategies that can be used for solving problems and coping with difficult situations and emotions. "They also note that the skills taught are transferable to other contexts.

Essentially, PRP is a behaviour modification intervention that should, on the surface, enable individuals to negotiate and move towards a life that they value. However, it should be noted here that the CA warns us that increased agency in one area does not always lead to valued functioning. If capability is enabled in the school arena this does not necessarily lead to increased functioning because of other contextually limiting factors. This is somewhat borne out by impact evaluations of the PRP in the UK which found that affects were limited to the academic year of the training programme only and that affects did not continue beyond this point. (UK Resilience Programme 2011)

In Wolverhampton schools the PRP was received enthusiastically by teachers who were perhaps experiencing the effects of worsening social conditions on children in their schools and saw this as a way of addressing an identified need. After the course, I was very excited...and because being Head of Year and we have so many issues where we're not being proactive enough, like self-harming, I was looking for something we could do with the students before things got to that stage. So for me this was something that we definitely need. Coleyshaw, Et al (2015) (p19) PRP was implemented differently to SUMO in that it was targeted to those who were considered to be in most need in the schools. Pupils were selected for reasons relating to behavioural issues, low self-esteem issues and/or learning difficulties.

Coleyshaw, et al, (2015). Ecclestone and Brunilla (2015, p.497) note that pedagogical approaches based on wellbeing can offer “an acceptable identity and helpful strategies to children who experience emotional and behavioural problems “Thus in terms of the capability approach as outlined by Nussbaum (2011) such behaviour modification programmes are arguably justifiable if they develop emotional regulation skills that allow children to engage more effectively with compulsory education (thus enhancing internal capabilities). Children did report that it was having an effect on the way they engaged with school and others reflecting an enhancement of capabilities in that social arena.

At the start I wasn't confident and wouldn't tell anyone anything but because of the sessions, I've learnt to open up and let other people help me. I thought it was a good idea but then I realised it was going to be quite hard to use considering some of the situations you end up in in this school. It's the complex situations I end up getting myself into. But I know how to use them [strategies], they're quite easy. Before, sometimes I just wanted to run away. Coleyshaw, et al, (2015)(p20) Alongside such positive responses, it is also important to consider how far such programmes effectively mask emotions that are legitimate (to be angry when it is justified). Problems appear to be located within the child's response to behavioural norms and the need for modification within the child rather than within the institution itself and may ignore the social situations from which behaviours may manifest. According to Ecclestone and Lewis

Behavioural interventions avoid engagement with the enduring social structures that attend the adversity that makes resilience necessary, thereby diverting efforts to confront the social inequalities which cause adversities, efforts which are ultimately necessary for the resilience of social systems. (2013, p203) A further issue is how far the programmes promote agency or choice? Notwithstanding Nussbaum's argument that “children are different” does a behavioural programme allow a student to engage with school as an active choice? For a child to articulate that before engagement with a programme they behaved in a way that perhaps alienated them from schooling but post programme they choose to see things differently and this new disposition allows them to get more from school is undeniably a good thing in terms of engaging with education. However, it could be seen merely as prosocialization to the norm of schooling which does not lead schooling to question its purpose or modus operandi for disaffected and disadvantaged learners. It also leads us to the question of whether teaching learning dispositions and positive psychology/wellbeing is now considered a core function of schooling within areas of deprivation. On the positive side the programmes did seem to promote personal agency within the school environment where the choice was either to engage or disengage and the school's choice was either to reengage learners or let them fall by the wayside or into behavioral referral units. Pupils noted:

*Just being able to open up and tell people how I feel instead of keeping it to myself, and then it all gets a bit much (S2). For me it's like when being with new people, making conversation and making new friends. I'm more confident. It's like there was a big wall there but now it's gone (S3).* Coleyshaw, et al, (2015) (p29)

Whilst this is admirable for individual responses to a targeted behavioural programme, it is promoted as a specialist offer delivered by teachers trained in the “method”. This has the following consequences, firstly that the targeted student is taken out from learning in regular subjects; secondly such programmes are invested in the personal experience of students, it's about them rather than about the curriculum subjects; and third unless further assessment is made the “real” problems in individual's lives may not be addressed by engagement with actual expert professionals rather than teachers.

### ***3. Wellbeing and resilience and its place in school curricula***

The conflict between “wellbeing” as subject within the curriculum space is compounded further when “universal” as opposed to targeted programmes are implemented. A universal programme means that “strategies to promote wellbeing” become central to individuals' development of vital internal capabilities that can enhance and affect the beings and doings of a person and will enable them to choose a life that they value. Whilst this can be a predominantly positive thing within schooling it begs the question of whether or not it needs “special attention” rather than mental wellbeing being embedded within the life of a school as a byproduct rather than it being part of a curriculum offer. Equally such programmes could be seen as a way of giving up on addressing social inequities within communities in favour of attributing deficit to individuals in the school space. A sort of a “you can fix yourself and people in this society need the facility to fix themselves”.

That schools should teach this overtly is perhaps indicative of a subject based curriculum where things have got so bad in society that we have to teach people how to survive emotionally rather than just giving them a place to learn skills and knowledge that they can use in later life. In this regard Drucker introduces an interesting perspective on the social organisations within society and their function in this regard. Organizations must competently perform the one social function for the sake of which they exist--the school to teach, the hospital to cure the sick, and the business to produce goods, services, or the capital to provide for the risks of the future. They can do so only if they single- mindedly concentrate on their specialized mission. But there is also society's need for these organizations to take social responsibility--to work on the problems and challenges of the community. Together these organizations are the community.(1997, p.237)

That wellbeing and mindfulness are increasingly perceived as essential skills and a focus of working on the problems not of the community but problems brought from the community to schooling is somewhat worrying if this is done at the expense of developing other skills. When one includes something in curricula one ultimately excludes something else. That wellbeing is often equated with self esteem, self efficacy and resilience muddies the water further when these qualities are not derived from a “regular” school experience based on subject knowledge, extracurricular activities and engagement with community based projects. It is a shift that has been gradually occurring within UK schooling that places wellbeing, happiness and increasingly character education and preventative resilience, confidence and self esteem as quasi curriculum subjects rather than embedded outcomes of a holistic educational process. The adoption of an “educare” stance that expands the pastoral caring role for schools and frames this as developing skills for lifelong learning and wellbeing seems to reflect the precarious nature of children living in a post industrialised context during a time of rapid societal change. Ecclestone and Lewis note:

According to policy- based, professional and popular commentators and global organisations such as UNICEF and the World Health Organisation, social and technological change, declining social networks and family structures, materialism and a test-driven curriculum have created deteriorating levels of well-being, mental health, and motivation for, and engagement in, formal education (e.g. Layard 2005; NEF 2011; Sharples2007; Sodha and Gugleimi 2009).(2013, p.4) It would seem that competitive schooling and test driven curricula are part of the reason for deteriorating mental health. The need for “wellbeing”, other than in its literal sense, as an essential part of schooling becomes a self perpetuating industry. Public Health England notes that:

“School-based programmes of social and emotional learning therefore have the potential to help young people acquire the skills they need to make good academic progress. They also produce benefits to pupils’ health and wellbeing, offering a significant return for the resource and time investment by schools to establish such programmes. Ofsted has identified a strong correlation between schools that achieved a high grade for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and those that were graded outstanding for overall effectiveness.”(2014 p8)

That schools potentially conceptualise this need as a specialist “Wellbeing Curriculum” embedded in the fabric of educational establishments is worrying especially when it is placed unquestioningly alongside the carrot of improved standards and performance criteria. Department for Education research also found that pupils with better attention skills also make more progress across the four key stages. “For example, pupils with no attention problems at age 13 had a total value-added GCSE score that was equivalent to more than one extra GCSE at grade A\* (63.38 points higher)”Public Health England (2014 p7).

### **3.1. Alternative approaches**

Rather than reconceptualising curricula and schooling to develop student agency and engagement through developing challenging tasks and activities that build resilience the solution appears to be to add on a wellbeing curriculum next to subject based curricula in order to a) prepare learners emotionally for the challenges of learning difficult subjects or b) to make sure learners behave acceptably enough to engage with a regime that is standardized, coercive and predicated on paying attention. As an alternative strategy to a universal wellbeing curricula schools could “work on the problems and challenges of the community” in their broadest sense which would include both individual and community asset based constructs of resilience.



According to Ecclestone and Lewis (2013) there is a danger that “resilience” is reduced to a set of psychological and emotional behavior regulation skills that can be turned on and off as the situation requires rather than as a response to dealing with either specific actual environmental or contextual risks or inequalities and adverse circumstances requiring a “resilient” response from within communities. Furedi (2008, p.649) quoted in Ecclestone and Lewis (2013) notes: “Vulnerability itself becomes a risk and ‘resilience is presented as a kind of preventative vaccine injected into the body politic from the outside’”

#### **4. Constructing resilience as an holistic activity**

Resilience, as noted in the introduction is more than “stickability” or “bounce back ability” and has been broadly defined as doing better than expected in the face of adversity, (Hart, Blincow and Thomas 2007). Others see it as a complex set of circumstances that combine in order to protect communities and individuals in adverse circumstances and that a key aspect of this is the strength of social relationships within communities; between groups and between carers/parents and children. (Schoon and Bartley 2008). MWIA (2011:p19) notes that resilience for young people and adolescents is: “strongly influenced by the strength of social relationships and has powerful effects, including an increased likelihood of escape from social and economic disadvantage, a lower risk for psychological problems in adulthood and protection in the context of continuing disadvantage.” They also note that: friends, support networks, valued social roles and positive views on neighbourhood, reduce the risk and severity of emotional and behavioural disorders among young people. Intertwined with this they also note that agency (the setting and pursuit of goals); mastery (ability to shape circumstances/the environment to meet personal needs) ; autonomy (self-determination/individuality) and self-efficacy (belief in one’s own capabilities) are key elements of wellbeing and resilience. They emphasise the interplay between individual characteristics and the social context (peers, social networks, social support, and relationships).

Herein, we have the essence of resilience and can see why it is so tempting to both policy makers and educators. Resilience is relatively easy to fragment into component parts and to see it as something that can be taught to individuals rather than it being embedded within education and healthy communities. There are many stories of triumph in adversity but it is arguable that these are the exception rather than the rule. Schoon and Bartley note: “although the literature on resilience has traditionally paid much attention to individual characteristics as the most important sources of the ability to thrive despite external adversity, we found that (a) individuals growing up in poverty are generally less likely to develop these resources than their more privileged peers, and (b) even if they clearly demonstrate these capabilities, they are still not achieving to the same level as their more privileged peers regarding educational, occupational or health related outcomes later on in life.” (2008, p.21) To build resilience it must be looked at holistically, this does not mean that one cannot develop agency and self efficacy but this needs to be part of a system wide approach to developing capabilities within and of communities. That is the capability of communities to develop the valued functioning of healthy young people with healthy minds.

##### **4.1 School based programmes as a part of the whole.**

Given this context of curriculum and resilience, the effectiveness of the WHP programmes to contribute to the development of both individual characteristics of resilience and prosocial relationships within schooling is worthy of further examination to see if they might eventually be effective as an element of a wider community based programme. In the first instance conceptualizations of resilience within the schools by both teachers and students were limited by the reductionist approach of the programmes themselves which are pretty much targeted at individual behaviours. As noted above the predominant conceptualization of resilience was that of “bounce back ability” and “being able to cope with what life throws at us and just carry on”. This was a very school based conceptualization of issues and challenges that students faced. However, there were attempts to engage with a wider community by involving parents in the SUMO sessions but the result of this was, for some, predictably disappointing highlighting separateness between community and school. “Sometimes it feels all the hard work that we do with them regarding resilience is undone when they go home ...if I am honest.... so it will be interesting to see how things work out after the summer.” (Coleyshaw, et al (2015, p14). There was some evidence of programmes making individuals more confident and equipping them with skills that could build productive social relationships within the school setting. I would share a case of a young lady in Year Five.... Academically she has always been a bit lower in ability, but has really come out of her shell, due to the responsibility and being in the role of ‘Peer Support’... she probably won’t recognise this in herself. She has newfound confidence and her efforts in her work have improved.

She's been given that chance and had some responsibility. This has had a massive impact on her. (2015, p14). and in some instances this transferred to the home. "Before I didn't get on as well with my little sister... yeah ...but now we compromise ...I say what we are going to do together.... we getting on loads better." Coleyshaw, et al (2015, p.16). In the secondary school PRP there were also reports of increased confidence, self esteem and the development of communication skills and friendship groups. She wasn't going to be able to do the group work especially with people she never usually speaks to but she did really well. In fact, they ended up winning. She had been pushed out of her comfort zone and she recognised it in herself. She was really pleased. It helps them. They communicate with others better. (Teacher). I now know what friends to pick and what friends not to pick (S1). Because I've changed, some friends don't accept that so friendships have changed. It's a good thing because I know who my real friends are (S1). It's helped me with friends. I was always having problems with friends but now I can sort them out better (S2). Coleyshaw, et al (2015:22). A significant number of pupils talked of the impact the PRP had upon their academic learning. For some, fewer distractions in class and a new found ability to avoid getting involved in peers' class time disruption had promoted a more focused approach to studies. For others pupils', increased confidence levels had enhanced their ability to participate in lessons as the following comments demonstrate:

Before, I couldn't answer questions, I wouldn't speak up but now I am confident and I get praise for it (S2). I can listen better. My confidence in lessons. Before I just used to rush the answers but now I think more (S2). I've changed my attitude and I can try to focus more on my work. I used to always join in with them but I'm more confident now and can concentrate on my own work (S3). Coleyshaw, et al (2015:24). Most students did not use skills acquired on the PRP outside of the school context. The following pupils speculated on whether they could transfer skills beyond the school:

I get the resilience but when I'm at home I just forget about it like if me and my mum are arguing, I still make sure I have to have the last say but I could use it if I wanted (S2). Yeh I agree, it's easier to do it with friends but harder to do it with family (S2). Coleyshaw, et al (2015:26). Again, school interpretations of the programmes highlighted the "otherness" of the home and community. References were made to also training parents with the programmes so that they could respond to arguments "in the same way". This appeared to locate "problems" within the participants rather than within the social and learning systems in which they are located. Perhaps the greatest impact of the programme was on student and staff relationships. The programmes rightly or wrongly mediated behaviour to 'acceptable for school levels' which resulted in an improvement across interactions with student-to-student and student/staff relationships. For one pupil, improved relations with a member of staff were directly attributed to the PRP:

My relationship with Miss is much better now. I understand her expectations. Before, she would get me mad. I thought she didn't like me and I would just walk out but now I get it. I understand and we get on now (S3). Coleyshaw, et al (2015:29). Another student saw the benefits of improved relations with staff members and accepted personal responsibility for any negative behaviour: "I don't speak to Miss like I used to. If you change your behaviour you can get more rewards whereas if you carry on you lose things because of what you've done and it's not anybody else's fault" (S3). Coleyshaw, et al (2015:29). For many students, improved social support networks were the benefits of being able to share experience as the following comments illustrate:

Just being able to open up and tell people how I feel instead of keeping it to myself, and then it all gets a bit much (S2). For me it's like when being with new people, making conversation and making new friends. I'm more confident. It's like there was a big wall there but now it's gone (S3). I talk to people more now instead of hiding it all and exploding. I talk to the teachers, the mentors and my friends (S3). Coleyshaw, et al (2015:29)

#### **4.2 Identity Capital?**

To some extent, it could be argued that this particular intervention enabled some participants to develop "identity capital" Cote (1996), Warin (2013). Where this is seen as the ability of individual's to reflect on who they are. Warin (2013) notes that developing the capacity to self reflect is fundamental to accessing social capital in intellectually privileged arenas. She contrasts two subjects in particular in her study: a relatively privileged individual from a middle class background, Martin and Liam, an individual from a poor, white, working class background contrasting their access to forms of capital and relationships.

The comparison highlights key differences in their support and social networks which reinforce the broadest definitions of how resilience is constructed as expressed by Ungar (2006), Newman (2004), Schoon and Bartley (2008), MWIA (2011) amongst others and also gives credence to the capability approach which focuses on the different circumstances of individuals and their ability to convert capabilities into functionings due to context and cultural circumstances. As Ecclestone & Brunila note: quoting Gillies(2011)

For some young people, emotional literacy and management strategies are useless in helping them manage the conflicting emotions these problems create. Instead the problems they experience are highly gendered, raced and classed and some young people recognise and resist the normative discourses and practices that are supposed to address them(2015, p.16). Notably, Warin's study contrasts Martin and Liam's relationship with teachers where Martin sees them as friends and Liam the opposite.

As a school absentee, Liam was not able to form relationships with school staff so was not able to benefit by accessing their social capital. Reflecting back on his school experiences at age 17 he told me he saw the teachers as his 'enemies' (2013, p.701). Overall, the PRP and SUMO interventions could be seen as mediating factors in enabling young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to develop the identity capital that allows them to succeed in a normative school environment and as such have positive value. However, fundamental questions remain within the WHP around the extent to which such programmes can: effect positive enduring change in people's lives in a context of multiple deprivation; mask other wider societal issues of class, gender and race; and how far resilience/wellbeing should be considered as a key part of what schools do. This adds to the existing tension of where the focus of schools and other education institutions should be located in an already contested curriculum space.

## **5. Conclusions**

To conclude we can revisit the capability approach to examine how the context of individuals lives impacts on their capability and ability to live flourishing human lives. Nussbaum (2010). Using this as a broad frame of reference we can look at intervention programmes within the WHP and evaluate whether they are enabling capability or limiting it. There are several issues to address at different levels of granularity. At the macro level we cannot assume that intervention programmes based on developing skills for dealing with emotions and coping strategies are effective in the face of gender, class, race and economic limitations in the societies in which individuals are located. They may however be a way of highlighting such issues. We can however, look at intervention programmes at a micro level and say that they do, on the face of it, enable some children to find a way through to an effective education by increasing agency (within normative limits) and by gaining access to; social capital and the skills necessary to invest in the self and identity capital so that they can aspire to a different life. Further critique at the level of the organisations that seek to serve children in Wolverhampton could point to a need for a radical change in the function of schooling to incorporate a wellbeing curriculum entitlement for all children. An approach such as this would be, according to Ecclestone and Lewis (2013), a way of pathologising the population and locating fault for increasing inequality and lack of social justice within individuals. A more progressive stance would be to ensure that schools work more directly with their community contexts to engage with societal issues authentically through the existing curriculum. For example; the curriculum subject of geography becomes about land use, availability of green spaces and air quality in the locality and individuals are enabled to have a voice by articulating such inequalities through community participation in local government. Equally, reflection on why schools do not provide experiences through existing curriculum activities that create self esteem, confident citizens and enable learner agency is necessary as a part of curriculum design. A blueprint for developing capability is required but schools can only do so much in the face of systemic inequality. Things that are within their realm of expertise are outlined within Newman's (2004 p3) description of the attributes of resilience. From there we can note the following attributes/activities:

“Positive school experience; A sense of mastery and a belief and one's own efforts can make a difference; Participation in a range of extra-curricular activities; The ability – or opportunity – to ‘make a difference’ by helping others or through part-time work; □Not to be excessively sheltered from challenging situations that provide opportunities to develop coping skills. “that can be developed through schools and that these do not necessarily need a specific well being or resilience programme to achieve them.

Other assets that Newman describes: Strong social support networks; the presence of a least one unconditionally supportive parent; or parent substitute; a committed mentor or other person from outside the family; are all things that are affected more within the community than in school but could equally arise out of school sponsored activities. It is important that if, as Drucker (1997) notes, schools have to work on the problems and challenges of the community, they have a philosophy that allows them to pursue this direction. Wenger's (2016) notion of the school as a community of practice where it is not a self-contained, closed world in which students acquire knowledge to be applied outside, but a part of a broader learning system could be a starting point for redesigning learning in Wolverhampton where the school is not the sole locus of learning and therefore unfairly positioned as being responsible for addressing all of society's ills. Wenger describes such a system as having three dimensions: "Internally: How to organize educational experiences that ground school learning in practice through participation in communities around subject matters?

Externally: How to connect the experience of students to actual practice through peripheral forms of participation in broader communities beyond the walls of the school? Over the lifetime of students: How to serve the lifelong learning needs of students by organizing communities of practice focused on topics of continuing interest to students beyond the initial schooling period?" (Wenger, n.d.). Such an approach could include the context of learners as the basis of curriculum and incorporate the causes of inequality, well being, risk and community development as subject matter so that all participants have a deep and progressive understanding of what it is like to grow up in Wolverhampton and how capabilities can be developed more equitably. Essentially, all stakeholders should be part of community asset development in a meaningful participatory learning partnership.

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